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Re: Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage (SB156/HB344).

January 27, 2025

Dear Members of the Maryland House of Delegates and State Senate,
the Health and Government Operations Committee,

I urge you to vote in favor of the Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services – Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage Bill (SB156/HB344).

My name is Kyra Kolbe Vocci and I am a concerned Maryland resident and suicide survivor. My sister, Andrea Kolbe, gave birth to a beautiful baby boy on August 24, 2023. She had a normal and healthy pregnancy. But, 15 weeks later, on December 11, 2023, one day after her 35th birthday, we lost her. She took her own life because of the devastating effects of post-partum depression and psychosis.

The current state of maternal health care, support, and resources for new mothers is simply unacceptable. Our healthcare system is failing to adequately support new moms during one of the most critical times in their lives. This bill is absolutely essential; it will provide new mothers and their partners with the necessary assessments, referrals, information, and care that are sorely lacking. Without these vital provisions, families risk experiencing devastating losses similar to what my own family has suffered. The pain, sadness, and complicated grief that have haunted us for the past 13 months without her are beyond words. It is crucial that we take immediate action to address these issues, as the emotional toll of this catastrophic event is far too great to ignore.

With the passage of this bill, women will leave the hospital equipped with information that can help them navigate the postpartum depression phase. They will receive essential referrals and assessments just weeks after bringing their new baby home, ultimately reducing the maternal mortality rate in Maryland. It is alarming that 1 in 4 women dies by suicide due to postpartum depression, a statistic that should be regarded as a national health emergency.

On behalf of my sister, Andrea, who leaves a sweet baby boy, her husband and the rest of her beloved family and friends in shock and grief, I thank you for giving full consideration to this essential legislation.

Sincerely, Kyra Vocci